Two Forsyte Interludes

by

John Galsworthy

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These two Forsyte Interludes are from the second Forsyte trilogy, which is called A Modern Comedy. A Silent Wooing *is the interlude between* The White Monkey *and* The Silver Spoon. Passers By *is that between* The Silver Spoon *and* Swan Song.

TWO FORSYTE INTERLUDES

A Silent Wooing

Passers by

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JOHN GALSWORTHY

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A Silent Wooing

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ON the first of February 1924 Jon Forsyte, convalescing from the 'flu, was sitting in the lounge of an hotel at Camden, South Carolina, with his bright hair slowly rising on his scalp. He was reading about a lynching.

A voice behind him said:

"Will you join our picnic over at those old-time mounds to-day?"

Looking up, he saw a young acquaintance called Francis Wilmot, who came from further south.

"Very glad to. Who's going?"

"Why, just Mr. and Mrs. Pulmore Hurrison, and that English novelist, Gurdon Minho, and the Blair girls and their friends, and my sister Anne and I. You could ride over horseback, if you want exercise."

" All right; they've got some new horses in this morning from Columbia."

" Why, that's fine! My sister and I'll ride horseback too, and some of the Blair girls. The Hurrisons can tote the others."

" ' Tote,' " said Jon, " good word, that. I say, this is a pretty bad case of lynching."

The young man to whom he spoke leaned in the window. Jon admired his face, as of ivory, with dark hair and eyes, and narrow nose and lips, and his lissom free attitude.

" All you Britishers go off the deep-end when you read of a lynching. You haven't got the negro problem up where you are at Southern Pines. They don't have it any to speak of in North Carolina."

" No, and I don't profess to understand it. But I can't see why negroes shouldn't be tried the same as white men. There may be cases where you've

got to shoot at sight; but I don't see how you can defend mob law. Once you catch a man, he ought to be tried properly."

" We're not taking any chances with that particular kind of trouble."

" But if a man isn't tried, how can you tell he's guilty? "

" Well, we'd sooner do without an innocent darkie now and again than risk our women."

" I should have thought killing a man for a thing he hadn't done was worse than anything."

" Maybe, in Europe. But not here. Things are in the large, still."

" What do they think about lynching in the north? "

" They squeal a bit, but they've no call to. If we've got negroes, they've got the Reds, and they surely have a wholesale way with them."

Jon Forsyte tilted back his rocking-chair, with a puzzled frown.

" I reckon there's too much space in

this country, still," said Francis Wilmot; " a man has all the chances to get off. So where we feel strong about a thing, we take the law into our own hands."

" Well, every country to its own fashions. What are these mounds we're going to? "

" Old Indian remains that go way back thousands of years, they say. You haven't met my sister? She only came last night."

" No. What time do we start? "

" Noon; it's about an hour's ride by the woods."

At noon then, in riding kit, Jon came out to the five horses, for more than one of the Blair girls had elected to ride. He started between them, Francis Wilmot going ahead with his sister.

The Blair girls were young and pretty with a medium-coloured, short-faced, well-complexioned, American prettiness, of a type to which he had

become accustomed during the two and a half years he had spent in the United States. They were at first extremely silent, and then extremely vocal. They rode astride, and very well. Jon learned that they, as well as the givers of the picnic, Mr. and Mrs. Pulmore Hurrison, inhabited Long Island. They asked him many questions about England, to which Jon, who had left it at the age of nineteen, invented many answers. He began to look longingly between his horse's ears at Francis Wilmot and his sister, cantering ahead in a silence that, from a distance, seemed extremely restful. Their way led through pine woods—of trees spindly and sparse, and over a rather sandy soil; the sunlight was clear and warm, the air still crisp. Jon rode a single-footing bay horse, and felt as one feels on the first day of recovered health.

The Blair girls wished to know what he thought of the English novelist—

they were dying to see a real highbrow. Jon had only read one of his books, and of the characters therein could only remember a cat. The Blair girls had read none; but they had heard that his cats were " just too cunning."

Francis Wilmot, reining up in front, pointed at a large mound which certainly seemed to be unnaturally formed. They all reined up, looked at it for two minutes in silence, judged it was " very interesting," and rode on. In a hollow the occupants of two cars were disembarking food. Jon led the horses away to tether them alongside the horses of Wilmot and his sister.

" My sister," said Francis Wilmot.

" Mr. Forsyte," said the sister.

She looked at Jon, and Jon looked at her. She was slim but distinctly firm, in a long dark-brown coat and breeches and boots; her hair was bobbed and dark under a soft brown felt hat. Her face was pale, rather browned, and had a sort of restrained eagerness—the

brow broad and clear, the nose straight and slightly sudden, the mouth unreddened, rather wide and pretty. But what struck Jon were her eyes, which were exactly his idea of a water nymph's. They slanted a little, and were steady and brown and enticing; whether there was ever such a slight squint in them he could not tell, but if there were it was an improvement. He felt shy. Neither of them spoke.

Francis Wilmot remarked, "I reckon I'm hungry," and they walked side by side towards the eatables.

Jon said suddenly to the sister:

"You've just come then, Miss Wilmot?"

"Yes, Mr. Forsyte."

"Where from?"

"From Naseby. It's way down between Charleston and Savannah."

"Oh, Charleston! I liked Charleston."

"Anne likes Savannah best," said Francis Wilmot.

Anne nodded. She was not talkative, it seemed, though her voice had sounded pleasant in small quantities.

" It's kind of lonely where we live," said Francis. " Mostly darkies. Anne's never seen an Englishman to speak to."

Anne smiled. Jon also smiled. Neither pursued the subject. They arrived at the eatables, spread in a manner calculated to give the maximum of muscular and digestive exertion. Mrs. Pulmore Hurrison, a lady of forty or so, and of defined features, was seated with her feet turned up; next to her, Gurdon Minho, the English novelist, had his legs in a more reserved position; and then came quantities of seated girls, all with pretty, unreserved legs; Mr. Pulmore Hurrison, somewhat apart, was pursing a small mouth over the cork of a large bottle. Jon and the Wilmots also sat down. The picnic had begun.

Jon soon realised that everybody was

expecting Gurdon Minho to say something beyond "Yes," "Really!", "Ah!", "Quite!" This did not occur. The celebrated novelist was at first almost painfully attentive to what everybody else said, and then seemed to go into a coma. Jon felt a patriotic disappointment, for he himself was, if anything, even more silent. He could see that, among the three Blair girls and their two girl friends, a sort of conspiracy was brewing, to quiz the silent English in the privacy of the future. Francis Wilmot's speechless sister was a comfort to him; he felt that she would neither be entitled nor inclined to join that conspiracy. He took refuge in handing victuals and was glad when the period of eating on constricted stomachs was over. Picnics were like Christmas Day, better in the future and the past than in the present. After the normal period of separation into genders, the baskets were repacked, and all resorted to their

vehicles. The two cars departed for another mound said to be two miles off. Francis Wilmot and the two Blair girls judged they would get back and watch the polo. Jon asked Anne Wilmot which she wished to do. She elected to see the other mound.

They mounted and pursued a track through the woods in silence, till Jon said:

"Do you like picnics?"

"I certainly do not."

"Nor do I. But riding?"

"I just adore it more than anything in the world."

"More than dancing?"

"Surely. Riding and swimming."

"Ah! I *thought*——" And he was silent.

"What did you think?"

"Well, I thought somehow you were a good swimmer."

"Why?"

Jon said with embarrassment:

"By your eyes——"

" What! Are they fishy? "

Jon laughed.

" Not exactly. They're like a water nymph's."

" I don't just know if that's a compliment."

" Of course it is."

" I thought nymphs weren't respectable."

" Oh! *Water* nymphs—very! Shy, of course."

" Do you have many in England? "

" No. As a matter of fact I've never seen one before."

" Then how do you know? "

" Just a general sense of what's fitting."

" I suppose you had a classical education. Don't you all have that in England? "

" Far from it."

" And how do you like America, Mr. Forsyte? "

" Very much. I get homesick sometimes."

" I'd love to travel."

" You never have? "

She shook her head. " I just stay at home and look after things. But I reckon we'll have to sell the old home —cotton doesn't pay any more."

" I grow peaches near Southern Pines, you know, up in North Carolina; that's paying at present."

" D'you live there alone? "

" No; with my mother."

" Is she English? "

" Yes."

" Have you a father? "

" He died four years ago."

" Francis and I have been orphans ten years."

" I wish you'd both come and stay with us some day; my mother would be awfully glad."

" Is she like you? "

Jon laughed.

" No. She's beautiful."

The eyes regarded him gravely, the lips smiled faintly.

" I'd just love to come, but Francis and I can't ever be away together."

" But," said Jon, " you're both here."

" We go back to-morrow; I wanted to see Camden." The eyes resumed their steady consideration of Jon's face. " Won't you come back with us and see our home—it's old? Francis would like to have you come."

" Do you always know what your brother would like? "

" Surely."

" That must be jolly. But do you really mean you want me? "

" I certainly do."

" I'd enjoy it awfully; I hate hotels. I mean—well, you know——" But as *he* didn't, he was not so sure that she did.

She touched her horse, and the single-footing animal broke into a canter.

Along the alleys of the eternal pine-wood the sun was in their eyes; a

warmed scent rose from pine needles, gum and herbs; the going was sandy and soft; the horses in good mood. Jon felt happy. This girl had strange eyes, enticing; and she rode better even than the Blair girls.

"I suppose all the English ride well?" she said.

"Most do, when they ride at all; but we don't ride much nowadays."

"I'd love to see England; our folk came from England in 1700—Worcestershire. Where is that?"

"It's our middle west," said Jon. "But as unlike as ever you can imagine. It's a fruit-growing county—very pretty; white timbered houses, pastures, orchards, woods, green hills. I went there walking one holiday with a school friend."

"It sounds just lovely. Our ancestors were Roman Catholics. They had a place called Naseby; that's why we call ours Naseby. But my grandmother was French Creole, from Louisiana. Is

it true that in England they think Creoles have negro blood in them? "

" We're very ignorant," said Jon. " *I* know the Creoles are the old French and Spanish families. You both look as if you had French blood."

" Francis does. Do you think we've passed that mound? We've come all of four miles, and I thought it was only two."

" Does it matter? The other mound was rather over-rated."

The lips smiled; she didn't ever quite laugh, it seemed.

" What Indians hereabouts? " asked Jon.

" I'm not too sure; Seminoles, if any, I think. But Francis says these mounds would be from way back before the present tribes. What made you come to America, Mr. Forsyte? "

Jon bit his lip. To give the reason—family feud—broken love affair—was not exactly possible.

" I went first to British Columbia;

but I didn't get on too well. Then I heard of peaches in North Carolina."

"But why did you leave England?"

"I suppose I just wanted to see the world."

"Yes," she said. It was a quiet but comprehending sound; Jon was the more gratified, because she had not comprehended. The image of his first love did not often haunt him now—had not for a year or more. He had been so busy with his peaches. Besides, Holly had written that Fleur had a boy. He said suddenly: "I think we ought to turn. Look at the sun!" The sun, indeed, was well down behind the trees.

"My—yes!"

Jon turned his steed. "Let's gallop, it'll be down in half an hour; and there's no moon till late."

They galloped back along the track. The sun went down even faster than he had thought, the air grew cold, the light grey. Jon reined up suddenly.

"I'm awfully sorry; I don't believe

we're on the track we came by from the picnic. I feel we've gone off to the right. The tracks are all alike and these horses only came in from Columbia yesterday; they don't know the country any more than we do."

The girl laughed.

"We'll be lost."

"M'm! That'll be no joke in these woods. Don't they ever end?"

"I reckon not, in these parts. It's an adventure."

"Yes; but you'll catch cold. It's jolly cold at night."

"And you've had 'flu!"

"Oh! That's all right. Here's a track to the left. Shall we go on, or shall we take it?"

"Take it."

They cantered on. It was too dark now for galloping, and soon too dark for cantering. And the track wound on and on.

"This is a pretty business," said Jon. "I *am* sorry." He peered towards

her riding beside him, and could just see her smile.

" Why! It's lots of fun."

He was glad she thought so, but he could not see it.

" I *have* been an ass. Your brother'll be pretty sick with me."

" He'll know I'm with you."

" If we only had a compass. We may be out all night at this rate. Here's another fork! Gosh, it *is* going to be dark."

And, almost as he spoke, the last of the light failed; he could barely see her five yards away. He came up close alongside, and she touched his sleeve.

" Don't worry," she said; " that spoils it."

Shifting his reins, he gave her hand a squeeze.

" You're splendid, Miss Wilmot."

" Oh! do call me Anne. Surnames seem kind of chilly when you're lost."

" Thank you very much. My name's Jon. Without an h, you know—short for Jolyon."

" Jolyon—Jon; I like it."

" Anne's always been my favourite name. Shall we stop till the moon rises, or ride on? "

" When will the moon rise? "

" About ten, I think, judging from last night. And it'll be nearly full. But it's hardly six yet."

" Let's ride on and leave it to the horses."

" Right! Only if they make for anywhere I'm pretty sure it'll be towards Columbia, which must be miles and miles."

They pursued the narrow track at a foot's pace. It was really dark now. Jon said: " Are you cold? You'd be warmer walking. I'll go ahead; stick close enough to see me."

He went ahead, and soon dismounted, feeling cold himself; there was utter silence among unending trees, and no light.

" I'm cold now," said the voice of Anne. " I'll get off too."

They had trailed on perhaps half an hour like this, leading their horses, and almost feeling their way, when Jon said: " Look! There's some sort of a clearing here! And what's that blackness on the left? "

" It's a mound."

" Which mound, I wonder? The one we saw, or the other, or neither? "

" I reckon we'd better stop here till the moon rises, then maybe we'll see which it is, and know our way."

" You're right. There'll be swamps, I expect. I'll tether the horses to leeward, and we'll try to find a nook. It *is* cold."

He tethered the horses out of the wind, and, turning back, found her beside him.

" It's creepy here," she said.

" We'll find a snug place, and sit down."

He put his hand through her arm, and they moved round the foot of the mound.

"Here," said Jon suddenly; "they've been digging. This'll be sheltered." He felt the ground—dry enough. " Let's squat here and talk."

Side by side, with their backs to the wall of the excavated hollow, they lighted cigarettes, and sat listening to the silence. But for a snuffle or soft stamp now and then from the horses, there wasn't a sound. Trees and wind, both, were too sparse for melody, and nothing but their two selves and their horses seemed alive. A sprinkle of stars in a very dark sky and the deeper blackness of the pine stems was all they could see. Ah! and the glowing tips of their cigarettes, and each other's faces vaguely illumined, now and then, thereby.

" I don't expect you'll ever forgive me for this," said Jon gloomily.

" Why! I'm just loving it."

" Very sweet of you to say so; but you must be awfully cold. Look here —have my coat! "

He had begun to take it off when she said: " If you do that I'll run out into the woods and get really lost."

Jon resumed his coat.

" It might have been one of those Blair girls," he said.

" Would you rather? "

" For your sake, of course. Not for my own—no, indeed! "

They were looking round at each other so that the tips of their cigarettes were almost touching. Just able to see her eyes, he had a very distinct impulse to put his arm round her. It seemed the natural and proper thing to do, but of course it was not " done "!

" Have some chocolate," she said.

Jon ate a very little. The chocolate should be reserved for her!

" This is a real adventure. It *is* black. I'd have been scared alone—seems kind of spooky here."

" Spirits of the old Indians," muttered Jon. " Only I don't believe in spirits."

" You would if you'd had a coloured nanny."

" Did you have one? "

" Surely, with a voice as soft as mush melon. We have one old darkie still, who was a slave as a boy. He's the best of all the negroes round—nearly eighty, with quite white wool."

" Your father couldn't have been in the Civil War, could he? "

" No; my two grandfathers and my great-grandfather."

" And how old are you, Anne? "

" Nineteen."

" I'm twenty-three."

" Tell me about your home in England."

" I haven't one now." He began an expurgated edition of his youth, and it seemed to him that she listened beautifully. He asked for her story in return; and, while she was telling it, wondered whether he liked her voice or not. It dwelled and slurred, but was soft and had great flavour. When she had

finished her simple tale, for she had hardly been away from home, there was silence, till Jon said:

" It's half-past seven only. I'll go and see that the horses are all right; then perhaps you could get a snooze."

He moved round the foot of the mound till he came to the horses, and stayed a little talking to them and stroking their noses. A feeling, warm and protective, stirred within him. This was a nice child, and a brave one. A face to remember, with lots behind it. Suddenly he heard her voice, low and as if pretending not to call: " Jon, oh, Jon! " He felt his way back through the darkness. Her hands were stretched out.

" It *is* so spooky! That funny rustling! I've got creeps down my back! "

" The wind's got up a bit. Let's sit back to back—it'll keep you warm. Or, look here, I'll sit against the wall; if you lean up against me you could go to sleep. It's only two hours now—we can ride on by moonlight."

They took up the suggested postures, her back against his side, and her head in the hollow of his arm and shoulder.

" Comfy? "

" Surely. It stops the creeps. Aren't I too heavy, though? "

" Not a bit," said Jon.

They smoked and talked a little more. The stars were brighter now, and their eyes more accustomed to the darkness. And they were grateful for each other's warmth. Jon enjoyed the scent, as of hay, that rose from her hair not far below his nose. Then came a long silence, while the warm protective feeling grew and grew within him. He would have liked to slip his arms round and hold her closer. But of course he did not. It was, however, as much as he could do to remain a piece of warmth impersonal enough for her to recline against. This was the very first time since he left England that he had felt an inclination to put his arms round anyone, so badly burnt

had he been in that old affair. The wind rose, talked in the trees, died away again; the stillness was greater than ever. He was very wide awake, and it seemed curious to him that she should sleep, for, surely, she was asleep—so still. The stars twinkled, and he gazed up at them. His limbs began to ache and twitch, and suddenly he realised that she was no more asleep than he. She slowly turned her head till he could see her eyes, grave, enticing.

" I'm too heavy," she said, and raised herself; but his arm restored her.

" Not a bit; so long as you're warm and comfy."

Her head settled in again; and the vigil was resumed. They talked a little now, of nothing important, and he thought: ' It's queer—one could live months knowing people and not know them half so well as we shall know each other now.'

Again a long silence fell; but this

time his arm was round her, it was more comfortable so, for both of them. And Jon began to have the feeling that it would be inadvisable for the moon to rise. Had she that feeling too? He wondered. But if she had, the moon in its courses paid no attention. For suddenly he became conscious that it was there, behind the trees somewhere lurking, a curious kind of stilly glimmer creeping about the air, along the ground, in and out of the tree-stems.

"The moon!" he said. She did not stir, and his heart beat rather fast. So! She did not want the moon to rise any more than he! And slowly the creeping glimmer became light, and, between the tree-stems, stole, invading their bodies till they were visible. And still they sat, unstirring, as if afraid to break a spell. The moon gained power and a cold glory, and rose above the trees; the world was alive once more. Jon thought, 'Could I kiss her?' and at once recoiled. As if she would

want! But, as though she divined his thought, she turned her head, and her eyes looked into his. He said:

" I'm in charge of you! "

Her answer was a little sigh, and she got up. They stood, stretching, gazing into the whitened mysterious wood.

" Look, Anne! It *is* the mound. There's the path down to the hollow where we had the picnic. Now we can find the way all right."

" Yes "—a sound he could not interpret. But they went towards the horses, untethered them, and mounted. Between them, they would remember the way now; and they set forth. They rode side by side.

Jon said: " Well, that'll be something to remember."

" Yes, I shall always remember it."

They said no more, except to consult about the way, but this was soon clear, and they cantered. They came out on the polo ground close to the hotel.

" You go in and relieve your brother's

mind. I'll take the horses round, and then come on."

When he entered the hotel lounge Francis Wilmot, still in riding clothes, was alone. His expression was peculiar, not exactly hostile, but certainly not friendly.

"Anne's gone up," he said. "I reckon you haven't much bump of locality. You surely had me scared."

"I'm awfully sorry," said Jon humbly, "I forgot the horses were new to the country."

"Well!" said Francis Wilmot, and shrugged his shoulders. Jon looked at the young man steadily.

"You don't think that I got bushed on purpose? Because you look as if you did."

Again Francis Wilmot shrugged his shoulders.

"Forgive me," said Jon, "but aren't you forgetting that your sister's a lady, and that one doesn't behave like a cad with a lady?"

Francis Wilmot did not answer; he went to a window and stood looking out. Jon felt very angry. He sat down on the arm of a long chair, suddenly extremely tired. He sat there looking at the ground, and frowning heavily. Damn the fellow! Had he been bullying Anne? If he had——! A voice behind him said: "I reckon I didn't mean it. I certainly am sorry. It was just the scare. Shake hands!"

Jon stretched out his own impulsively, and they shook hands, looking straight into each other's eyes.

"You must be about through," said Francis Wilmot. "Come on to my room; I've gotten a flask. I've given Anne a dram already."

They went up. Jon sat in the only chair, Francis Wilmot on the bed.

"Anne tells me she's asked you to come home with us to-morrow. I surely hope you will."

"I should simply love to."

"That's fine!"

They drank, talked a little, smoked.

" Good night," said Jon suddenly, " or I shall go to sleep here."

They shook hands again, and Jon staggered to his room. He fell asleep at once.

They travelled next day, all three, through Columbia and Charleston, to the Wilmots' place. It stood in the bend of a red river, with cotton fields around, and swampy ground where live oaks grew, melancholy, festooned with Florida moss. The old slave quarters, disused except as kennels, were still standing; the two-storied house had flights of wooden steps running up on each side, on to the wide wisteria-covered porch, and needed a coat of paint; and, within, rooms ran one into the other, hung with old portraits of dead Wilmots and de Frevilles; and darkies wandered around and talked their soft drawled speech.

Jon was happier than he had been since he landed in the New World

three and a half years ago. In the mornings he sauntered with the dogs in the sunlight or tried to write poetry—for the two young Wilmots were busy. After the midday meal he rode with them or with Anne alone. In the evening he learned from her to play the ukulele before a wood fire lighted at sundown, or heard about cotton culture from Francis, with whom, since that moment of animosity, he was on the best of terms.

Between Anne and himself there was little talk; they had, as it were, resumed the silence which had fallen when they sat in the dark under the old Indian mound. But he watched her; indeed, he was always trying to catch the grave enticing look in her dark eyes. More and more she seemed to him unlike any girl he had ever known; quicker, more silent, and with more "sand." The days went on, in warm sun, and the nightly scent of wood smoke; and his holiday drew to an end. He could

play the ukulele now, and they sang to it—negro spirituals, songs from *Rose Marie*, and other immortal works. The last day came, and dismay descended on Jon. To-morrow, early, he was going back to his peaches at Southern Pines! That afternoon, riding with her for the last time, the silence was almost unnatural, and she did not even look at him. Jon went up to change, with panic in his heart. He knew now that he wanted to take her back with him, and he thought he knew that she did not want to come. How he would miss watching for those eyes to be fixed on him. He was thirsty with the wish to kiss her. He went down moodily, and sat in a long chair before the wood fire, pulling a spaniel's ears and watching the room darken. Perhaps she wouldn't even come for a last sing-song. Perhaps there would be nothing more but dinner and an evening *à trois;* not even a chance to say he loved her and be told that she didn't love him. And he

thought, miserably: " It's my fault—I'm a silent fool; I've missed all my chance." The room darkened till there was nothing but firelight, and the spaniel went to sleep. Jon, too, closed his eyes. It was as if he could wait better, thus—for the worst. When he opened them she was standing in front of him with the ukuleles in her hands.

" Do you want to play, Jon? "

" Yes," said Jon, " let's play. It's the last time "; and he took his ukulele.

She sat down on the rug before the fire, and began to tune hers. Jon slipped down beside the spaniel and began to tune his. The spaniel got up and went away.

" What shall we sing? "

" I don't want to sing, Anne. You sing; I'll just accompany."

She didn't look at him! She would not look at him! It was all up! What a fool he'd been!

Anne sang. She sang a crooning

phrase—the call over the mountains, from *Rose Marie*. Jon plucked his strings, and the tune plucked his heart. She sang it through. She sang it again, and her eyes slid round. God! She *was* looking at him. She mustn't see that he knew she was! It was too good—that long dark look over the ukulele. Between him and her were her ukulele and his own. He dropped the beastly thing. And, suddenly shifting along the floor, he put his arm round her. Without a word she drooped her head against his shoulder, as when they sat under the Indian mound. He bent his cheek down to her hair. It smelled, as it had then, of hay. And, just as she had screwed her face round in the moonlight, she turned it to him now. But this time Jon kissed her lips.

Passers By

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I

IN Washington, District of Columbia, the " Fall " sun shone, and all that was not evergreen or stone in Rock Creek Cemetery was glowing. Before the Saint Gaudens statue Soames Forsyte sat on his overcoat, with the marble screen to his back, enjoying the seclusion and a streak of sunlight passaging between the cypresses.

With his daughter and her husband he had been up here already, the afternoon before, and had taken a fancy to the place. Apart from the general attraction of a cemetery, this statue awakened the connoisseur within him. Though not a thing you could acquire, it was undoubtedly a work of art, and produced a very marked effect. He did

not remember a statue that made him feel so thoroughly at home. That great greenish bronze figure of seated woman within the hooding folds of her ample cloak seemed to carry him down to the bottom of his own soul. Yesterday, in the presence of Fleur, Michael, and other people, all gaping like himself, he had not so much noted the mood of the thing as its technical excellence, but now, alone, he could enjoy the luxury of his own sensations. Some called it " Grief," some " The Adams Memorial." He didn't know, but in any case there it was, the best thing he had come across in America, the one that gave him the most pleasure, in spite of all the water he had seen at Niagara and those skyscrapers in New York. Three times he had changed his position on that crescent marble seat, varying his sensations every time. From his present position the woman had passed beyond grief. She sat in a frozen acceptance deeper than death

itself, very remarkable! There was something about death! He remembered his own father, James, a quarter of an hour after death, as if—as if he had been told at last!

A red-oak leaf fell on to his lapel, another on to his knee; Soames did not brush them off. Easy to sit still in front of that thing! They ought to make America sit there once a week!

He rose, crossed towards the statue, and gingerly touched a fold in the green bronze, as if questioning the possibility of everlasting nothingness.

"Got a sister living in Dallas—married a railroad man down there as a young girl. Why! Texas is a wonderful State. I know my sister laughs at the idea that the climate of Texas isn't about right."

Soames withdrew his hand from the bronze, and returned to his seat. Two tall thin elderly figures were entering the sanctuary. They moved into the middle and stood silent. Presently one

said "Well!" and they moved out again at the other end. A little stir of wind fluttered some fallen leaves at the base of the statue. Soames shifted along to the extreme left. From there the statue was once more woman—very noble! And he sat motionless in his attitude of a thinker, the lower part of his face buried in his hand.

Considerably browned and distinctly healthy-looking, he was accustomed to regard himself as worn out by his long travel, which, after encircling the world, would end, the day after to-morrow, by embarkation on the "Adelphic." This three-day run to Washington was the last straw, and he was supporting it very well. The city was pleasing; it had some fine buildings and a great many trees with the tints on, there wasn't the rush of New York, and plenty of houses that people could live in, he should think. Of course the place was full of Americans, but that was unavoidable. He was happy about

Fleur too; she had quite got over that unpleasant Ferrar business, seemed on excellent terms with young Michael, and was looking forward to her home and her baby again. There was, indeed, in Soames a sense of culmination and of peace—a feeling of virtue having been its own reward, and, beyond all, the thought that he would soon be smelling English grass and seeing again the river flowing past his cows. Annette, even, might be glad to see him—he had bought her a really nice emerald bracelet in New York. To such general satisfaction this statue of "Grief" was putting the finishing touch.

"Here we are, Anne."

An English voice, and two young people at the far end—going to chatter, he supposed! He was preparing to rise when he heard the girl say, in a voice American, indeed, but soft and curiously private:

"John, it's terribly great. It makes

me sink here." From the gesture of her hand, Soames saw that it was where the thing had made *him* sink, too.

" Everlasting stillness. It makes me sad, John."

As the young man's arm slid under hers his face came into view. Quick as thought, half of Soames's face disappeared again into his hand. " John? " " Jon " was what she had meant to say. Young Jon Forsyte—not a doubt of it! And this girl, his wife, sister—as he had heard—of that young American Francis Wilmot! What a mischance! He remembered the boy's face perfectly, though he had only seen it in that Gallery off Cork Street, and the pastrycook's after, and once on that grim afternoon when he had gone down to Robin Hill to beg his own divorced first wife to let *her* son marry *his* daughter! Never had he been more pleased to be refused! Never had the fitness of things been better confirmed; and yet, the pain of telling Fleur of

that refusal remained in his memory like a still-live ember, red and prickly under the ashes of time. Behind his shadowing hat and screening hand Soames made sure. The young man was standing bare-headed, as if in reverence to the statue. A Forsyte look about him, in spite of too much hair. A poet—he had heard! The face wasn't a bad one; it had what they called charm; the eyes were deep-set, like his grandfather's, old Jolyon's, and the same colour, dark grey; the touch of brightness on his head came from his mother, no doubt; but the chin was a Forsyte's chin. Soames looked at the girl. A fair height, brownish pale, brown hair, dark eyes; pretty trick of the neck, nice way of standing too; very straight, an attractive figure! But how could the young man have taken to her after Fleur? Still, for an American she looked natural; a little bit like a nymph, with a kind of privacy about her.

Nothing in America had struck Soames so much as the lack of privacy. If you wanted to be private you had to disconnect your telephone and get into a bath—otherwise they rang you up just as you were going to sleep, to ask if you were Mr. and Mrs. Newberg. The houses, too, were not divided from each other, nor even from the roads. In the hotels the rooms all ran into each other, and as likely as not there'd be a drove of bankers in the hall. Dinner too—nothing private about that; even if you went out to dinner, it was always the same: lobster-cocktails, shad, turkey, asparagus, salad, and ice-cream; very good dishes, no doubt, and you put on weight, but nothing private about them.

Those two were talking; he remembered the young man's voice.

" It's the greatest man-made thing in America, Anne. We haven't anything so good at home. It makes me hungry—we'll have to go to Egypt."

" Your mother would just love that, Jon; and so would I."

" Come and see it from the other side."

Soames rose abruptly and left the alcove. Though not recognised, he was flustered. A ridiculous, even a dangerous encounter. He had travelled for six months to restore Fleur's peace of mind, and now that she was tranquil, he would not for the world have her suddenly upset again by a sight of her first love. He remembered only too well how a sight of Irene used to upset himself. Yes—and as likely as not Irene was here too! Well, Washington was a big place. Not much danger! They were going to Mount Vernon in the afternoon, and to-morrow morning early were off again! At the top of the cemetery his taxicab was waiting. One of those other cars must belong to those two young people; and he glanced at them sidelong. Did there rise in him some fear, some hope, that

in one of them he would see her whom, in another life, he had seen, day by day, night by night, waiting for what —it seemed—he could not give her. No! only the drivers and their voices, their " Yeahs! " and their " Yeps! " Americans no longer said " Yes," it seemed. And getting into his taxi. he said:

" Hotel Pótomac."

" Hotel Potómac? "

" If you prefer it."

The driver grinned and shut Soames in. The Veterans' Home! They said the veterans had pretty well died off. Still, they'd have plenty coming on from this last war. Besides, what was space and money to America? They had so much they didn't know what to do with it. Well, he didn't mind that, now that he was leaving. He didn't mind anything. Indeed, he had invited quite a number of Americans to come and see his pictures if they came to England. They had been very kind, very

hospitable; he had seen a great many fine pictures too, including some Chinese; and a great many high buildings, and the air was very stimulating. It wouldn't suit him to live here, but it was all very much alive, and a good tonic, for a bit. 'I can't see *her* living here!' he thought suddenly. 'There never was anyone more private.' The cars streamed past him, or stood parked in rows. America was all cars and newspapers! And a sudden thought disturbed him. They put everything into the newspapers over here; what if his name were among the arrivals?

Reaching his hotel, he went at once towards the kiosk in the hall where you could buy newspapers, tooth-paste, "candy" to pull your teeth out—teeth to replace them, he shouldn't be surprised. List of arrivals? Here it was: "Hotel Potomac: Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus K. McGunn; the Misses Errick; Mr. H. Yellam Roof; Mr. Semmes

Forsyth; Mr. and Mrs. Munt." As large as life, but, fortunately, only half as natural! Forsyth! Munt! They never could get anything right in the papers. " Semmes! " Unrecognisable, he should hope. And going over to the bureau, he turned the register towards him. Yes! he had written the names quite clearly. Lucky, too, or they'd have got 'em right, by mistake. And then, turning the leaf, he read: " Mr. and Mrs. Jolyon Forsyte." Here! At this hotel—those two! A day before them; yes, and at the very top, dated some days ago: " Mrs. Irene Forsyte." His mind travelled with incredible swiftness. He must deal with this at once. Where were Fleur and Michael? They had seen the Freer Gallery with him yesterday, and a beautiful little Gallery it was, he had never seen anything better, and the Lincoln Memorial, and that great tower thing which he had refused to go up. This morning they had said they should go to the

Corcoran Gallery, where there was a Centenary Exhibition. He had known what that meant. He had seen English centenaries in his time. All the fashionable painters of their day—and the result too melancholy for words! And to the clerk he said:

"Is there a restaurant here where I can get a good lunch?"

"Sure; they cook fine at Filler's."

"Good! If my daughter and her husband come in, kindly tell them to meet me at Filler's at one o'clock."

And, going back to the kiosk, he bought some tickets for the opera, so that they should be out in the evening, and in ten minutes was on his way to the Corcoran Gallery. From Filler's they would go straight off to Mount Vernon; they would dine at another hotel before the opera, and to-morrow be off by the first train—he would take no chances. If only he could catch them at the Corcoran!

Arriving, he mechanically bought a

catalogue and walked upstairs. The rooms opened off the gallery and he began at the end room. Ah! there they were, in front of a picture of the setting sun! Sure of them now, but not sure of himself—Fleur was so sharp—Soames glanced at the pictures. Modern stuff, trailing behind those French extravagances Dumetrius had shown him six months ago, in London. As he had thought, too, a wholesale lot; might all have been painted by the same hand. He saw Fleur touch Michael's arm and laugh. How pretty she looked! A thousand pities to have her apple-cart upset again! He came up behind them. What? That setting sun was a man's face, was it? Well, you never knew nowadays.

And he said: " I thought I'd have a look in. We're lunching at Filler's; they tell me it's better than the hotel; and we can go straight on from there to Mount Vernon. I've got some seats for the opera, to-night, too."

And conscious of Fleur's scrutiny, he stared at the picture. He did not feel too comfortable.

" Are the older pictures better? " he asked.

" Well, sir, Fleur was just saying—how can anyone go on painting in these days? "

" How do you mean? "

" If you walk through, you'll say the same. Here's a hundred years of it."

" The best pictures never get into these shows," said Soames; " they just take anything they can get. Ryder, Innes, Whistler, Sargent—the Americans have had some great painters."

" Of course," said Fleur. " But do you really want to go round, Dad? I'm frightfully hungry."

" No," said Soames; " after that Saint Gaudens thing I don't feel like it. Let's go and lunch."

II

Mount Vernon! The situation was remarkable! With all that colour on the trees, the grassy cliff, and below it the broad blue Potomac, which, even Soames confessed, was more imposing than the Thames. And the low white house up here, dignified and private, indeed, except for the trippers, almost English, giving him a feeling he had not had since he left home. He could imagine that fellow George Washington being very fond of it. One could have taken to the place oneself. Lord John Russell's old house on the hill at Richmond was something like this, except, of course, for the breadth of river, and the feeling you always had in America and Canada, so far as he had seen, that they were trying to fill the country and not succeeding—such a terrific lot of space, and apparently no time. Fleur was in raptures, and young Michael had remarked that it

was "absolutely topping." The sun fell warmly on his cheek while he took his last look from the wide porch, before entering the house itself. He should remember this—America had not all been run up yesterday! He passed into the hall and proceeded, mousing, through the lower rooms. Really! They had done it extraordinarily well. Nothing but the good old original stuff, from a century and a half ago, reminding Soames of half-hours spent in the antique shops of Taunton and Tunbridge Wells. Too much "George Washington" of course! George Washington's mug, George Washington's foot-bath, and his letter to so-and-so, and the lace on his collar, and his sword and his gun and everything that was his! Still, that was unavoidable! Detached from the throng, detached even from his daughter, Soames moved —covered, as in a cloak, by his collector's habit of silent appraisement; he so disliked his judgments to be con-

fused by uncritical imbecilities. He had reached the bedroom upstairs where George Washington had died, and was gazing through the grille, when he heard sounds which almost froze his blood; the very voices he had listened to that morning before the Saint Gaudens statue, and with those voices Michael's voice conjoined! Was Fleur there too? A backward glance relieved him. No! the three were standing at the head of the main stairs exchanging the remarks of strangers casually interested in the same thing. He heard Michael say, "Jolly good taste in those days." And Jon Forsyte answering, "All hand-made, you see."

Soames dived for the back stairs, jostled a stout lady, recoiled, stammering, and hurried on down. If Fleur was not with Michael it meant that she had got hold of the curator. Take her away, while those three were still upstairs! That was the thought in his mind. Two young Englishmen were

not likely to exchange names or anything else, and, if they did, he must get hold of Michael quickly. But how to get Fleur away? Yes, there she was—talking to the curator in front of George Washington's flute laid down on George Washington's harpsichord in the music-room! And Soames suffered. Revolting to seem unwell, still more revolting to pretend to seem! And yet—what else? He could not go up to her and say: " I've had enough. Let's go to the car! " Swallowing violently, he put his hand to his head and went towards the harpsichord.

" Fleur! " he said, and without pausing to let her take him in, went on: " I'm not feeling the thing. I must go to the car."

The words no doubt were startling, coming from one so undramatic.

" Dad! What is it? "

" I don't know," said Soames; " giddy. Give me your arm."

Really dreadful to him—the whole

thing! On the way to the car, parked at the entrance, her concern was so embarrassing that he very nearly abandoned his ruse. But he managed to murmur:

"I've been doing too much, I expect; or else it's that cookery. I'll just sit quiet in the car."

To his great relief she sat down with him, got out her smelling-bottle, and sent the chauffeur to tell Michael. Soames was touched, though incommoded by having to sniff the salts, which were very strong.

"Great fuss about nothing," he muttered.

"We'd better get home, dear, at once, so that you can lie down."

In a few minutes Michael came hurrying. He too expressed what seemed to Soames a genuine concern, and the car was started. Soames sat back with his hand in Fleur's, and his mouth and eyes tight closed, feeling perhaps better than he'd ever felt in

his life. Before they reached Alexandria he opened his lips to say that he had spoiled their trip for them; they must go home by way of Arlington, and he would stay in the car while they had a look at it. Fleur was for going straight on, but he insisted. Arrived, however, at this other white house, also desirably situated on the slope above the river, he almost had a fit while waiting for them in the car. What if the same idea had occurred to Jon Forsyte and he were suddenly to drive up? It was an intense relief when they came out again, saying that it was nice but not a patch on Mount Vernon: the porch columns were too thick. When the car was again traversing the bright woods Soames opened his eyes for good.

"I'm all right again, now. It was liver, I expect."

"You ought to have some brandy, Dad. We can get some on a doctor's prescription."

"Doctor? Nonsense. We'll dine

upstairs and I'll get over the waiter; they must have something in the house."

Dine upstairs! That was a happy thought!

In their sitting-room he lay down on the sofa, touched and gratified, for Fleur was propping up his cushions, shading the light, looking over the top of her book to see how he was. He did not remember when he had felt so definitely that she really did care about him. He even thought: 'I ought to be ill a little, every now and then!' And yet, if he ever complained of feeling ill at home, Annette at once complained of feeling worse!

Close by, in the little salon opposite the stairs, a piano was being played.

"Does that music worry you, dear?"

Into Soames' mind flashed the thought 'Irene!' If it were, and Fleur were to go out to stop it, then, indeed, would fat be in the fire!

"No; I rather like it," he said, hastily.

" It's a very good touch."

Irene's touch! He remembered how June used to praise her touch; remembered how he had caught that fellow Bosinney listening to her, in the little drawing-room in Montpellier Square, with the wild-cat look on his face, the fellow had; remembered how she used to stop playing when he himself came in—from consideration, or the feeling that it was wasted on him —which? He had never known. He had never known anything! Well—another life! He closed his eyes, and instantly saw Irene in her emerald-green dinner-gown, standing in the Park Lane hall, first feast after their honeymoon, waiting to be cloaked! Why did such pictures come back before closed eyes—pictures without rhyme or reason? Irene brushing her hair—grey now, of course! As he was seventy, she must be nearly sixty-two! How time went! Hair *feuille morte* —old Aunt Juley used to call it with a

certain pride in having picked up the expression—and eyes so velvet dark! Ah! but handsome was as handsome did! Still—who could say! Perhaps, if he had known how to express his feelings! If he had understood music! If she hadn't so excited his senses! Perhaps—oh, perhaps your grandmother! No riddling that out! And here—of all places. A tricksy business! Was one never to forget?

Fleur went to pack and dress. Dinner came up. Michael spoke of having met a refreshing young couple at Mount Vernon, "an Englishman; he said Mount Vernon made him awfully homesick."

"What was his name, Michael?"

"Name? I didn't ask. Why?"

"Oh! I don't know. I thought you might have."

Soames breathed again. He had seen her prick her ears. Give it a chance, and her feeling for that boy of Irene's would flare up again. It was in the blood!

" Bright Markland," said Michael, " has been gassing over the future of America—he's very happy about it because there are so many farmers still, and people on the land; but he's also been gassing over the future of England—he's very happy about it, and there's hardly anybody on the land."

" Who's Bright Markland? " muttered Soames.

" Editor of our *Scrutator*, sir. Never was a better example of optimism, or the science of having things both ways."

" I'd hoped," said Soames heavily, " that seeing these new countries would have made you feel there's something in an old one, after all."

Michael laughed. " No need to persuade me of that, sir. But you see I belong to what is called the fortunate class, and so, I believe, do you."

Soames stared. This young man was getting sarcastic!

" Well," he said, " I shall be glad to be home. Are you packed? "

They were; and presently he telephoned for a cab to take them to the opera. So that they might not hang about in the hall, he went down, himself, to see them into it. The incident passed without let or hindrance; and with a deep sigh of relief he resumed his place in the lift, and was restored to his room.

III

He stood there at the window, looking out at the tall houses, the lights, the cars moving below and the clear starry sky. He was really tired now; another day of this, and he would not need to simulate indisposition. A narrow squeak, indeed—a series of them! He wished he were safe home. To be under the same roof with that woman —how very queer! He had not passed a night under the same roof with her

since that dreadful day in November '87, when he walked round and round Montpelier Square in such mortal agony, and came to his front door to find young Jolyon there. One lover dead, and the other already on his threshold! That night she had stolen away from his house; never again till this night had the same roof covered them. That music again—soft and teasing! *Was* it she playing? To get away from it, he went into his bedroom and put his things together. He was not long about that, for he had only a suitcase with him. Should he go to bed? To bed, and lie awake? This thing had upset him. If it were she, sitting at that piano, a few yards away, what did she look like now? Seven times—no, eight—he had seen her since that long ago November night. Twice in her Chelsea flat; then by that fountain in the Bois de Boulogne; at Robin Hill when he delivered his ultimatum to her and young Jolyon;

at Queen Victoria's funeral; at Lord's Cricket ground; again at Robin Hill when he went to beg for Fleur; and in the Goupenor Gallery just before she came out here. Each meeting he could remember in every detail, down to the lifting of her gloved hand at the last—the faint smiling of her lips.

And Soames shivered. Too hot—these American rooms! He went back into the sitting-room; they had cleared away and brought him the evening paper; no good in that! He could never find anything in the papers over here. At this distance from the past, all this space and all this time—what did he feel about her? Hate? The word was too strong. One didn't hate those who weren't near one. Besides, he had never hated her! Not even when he first knew she was unfaithful. Contempt? No. She had made him ache too much for that. He didn't know what he felt. And he began walking up and down, and once or twice stood at

the door and listened, as might a prisoner in his cell. Undignified! And going to the sofa he stretched himself out on it. He would think about his travels. Had he enjoyed them? One long whirl of things, and—water. And yet, all had gone according to programme, except China, to which they had given as wide a berth as possible, owing to its state. The Sphinx and the Taj Mahal, Vancouver Harbour, and the Rocky Mountains, they played a sort of hide-and-seek within him; and now—that strumming; was it She? Strange! You had, it seemed, only just one season of real heat. Everything else that happened to you was in a way tepid, and perhaps it was as well, or the boiler would burst. His emotions in the years when he first knew her—would he go through them again? Not for the world. And yet! Soames got up. That music was going on and on; but when it stopped, the player—She or not She!—would be no longer visible.

Why not walk past that little salon—just walk past, and—and take a glimpse? If it were She, well, probably she'd lost her looks—the beauty that had played such havoc with him! He had noticed the position of the piano; yes—the player would be in profile to him. He opened the door; the music swelled, and he stole forth.

The breadth of Fleur's room, only, separated him from that little open salon opposite the stairs. No one was in the corridor, not even a bell-boy. Very likely some American woman after all, possibly that girl—Jon's wife! Yet no—there was something—something in the sound! And holding up the evening paper before him, he moved along. Three pillars, with spaces between them, divided the salon from the corridor, avoiding what Soames so missed in America—the fourth wall. At the first of these pillars he came to a stand. A tall lamp with an orange shade stood by the keyboard,

and the light from it fell on the music, on the keys, on the cheek and hair of the player. *She!* Though he had supposed her grey by now, the sight of that hair without a thread in it of the old gold affected him strangely. Curved, soft, shining, it covered her like a silver casque. She was in evening dress, and he could see that her shoulders, neck, and arms were still rounded and beautiful. All her body from the waist was moving lightly to the rhythm of her playing. Her frock was of a greyish heliotrope. Soames stood behind his pillar gazing, his hand over his face, lest she should turn her head. He did not exactly feel—the film of remembrance was unrolled too quickly. From the first sight of her in a Bournemouth drawing-room to the last sight of her in the Goupenor Gallery—the long sequence passed him by in its heat and its frost and its bitterness; the long struggle of sense, the long failure of spirit; the long aching passion, and its

long schooling into numbness and indifference. The last thing he wanted, standing there, was to speak with her, and yet he could not take his eyes away. Suddenly she stopped playing; bending forward she closed the music and reached to turn out the lamp. Her face came round in the light, and, cowering back, Soames saw it, still beautiful, perhaps more beautiful, a little worn, so that the eyes looked even darker than of old, larger, softer under the still-dark eyebrows. And once more he had that feeling: "There sits a woman I have never known." With a sort of anger he craned back till he could see no longer. Ah! she had had many faults, but the worst of her faults had always been, was still, her infernal mystery! And, stepping silently like a cat, he regained his room.

He felt tired to death now, and, going into his bedroom, undressed hurriedly and got into bed. He wished with all his heart that he were on

board, under the British flag. " I'm old," he thought suddenly, " old." This America was too young for him, so full of energy, bustling about to ends he could not see. Those Eastern places had been different. And yet, after all, he was a mere seventy. His father had lived to be ninety—old Jolyon eighty-five, Timothy a hundred, and so with all the old Forsytes. At seventy *they* weren't playing golf; and yet they were younger, younger anyway than he felt to-night. The sight of that woman had—had——! Old!

' I'm not going back to be old,' he thought. ' If I feel like this again I shall consult someone.' They had some monkey thing nowadays they could inject. He shouldn't try that. Monkeys indeed! Why not pigs or tigers? Hold on somehow another ten or fifteen years! By that time they would have found out where they were in England. That precious capital levy would have been exploded. He would

know what he had to leave to Fleur; would see her baby grow into a boy and go to school—public school—even! Eton? No—young Jolyon had been there. Winchester, the Monts' school? Not there either, if he could help it. Harrow was handy; or his own old school—Marlborough? Perhaps he would see him play at Lord's. Another fifteen years before Kit could play at Lord's! Well—something to look forward to, something to hold on for. If you hadn't that, you felt old, and if you *felt* old, you *were* old, and the end soon came. How well that woman had worn! She——! There were his pictures too; take them up more seriously. That Freer Gallery! Leave them to the nation, and your name lived—much comfort in *that!* She! *She* would never die!

A crack of light on the wall close to the door.

"Asleep, Dad?"

So Fleur had remembered to come and have a look at him!

" How are you now, dear? "

" All right; tired. How was the opera? "

" Middling."

" I've told them to call us at seven. We'll breakfast on the train."

Her lips touched his forehead. If—if that woman—but never—never once—never of her own accord——!

" Good night," he said. " Sleep well! "

The light on the wall narrowed and was gone! Well! He was drowsy now. But, in this house—Shapes—Shapes! Past—present—at the piano—at his bedside—passing—passing by—and there, behind them, the great bronze-hooded woman, with the closed eyes, deep sunk in everlasting—profound—pro——! And from Soames a gentle snore escaped.

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